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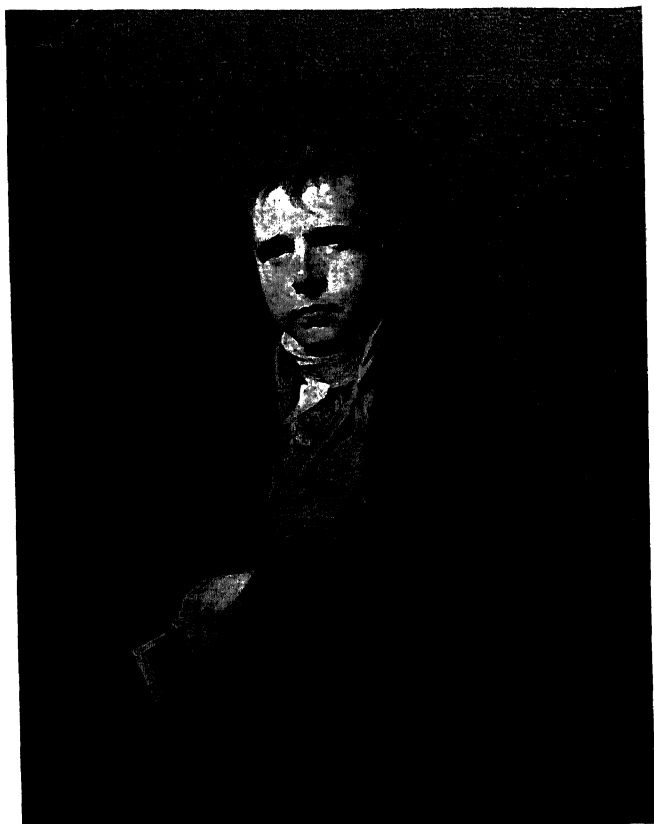
LOCKHART'S  
LIFE OF SCOTT

COPIOUSLY ANNOTATED AND ABUNDANTLY ILLUSTRATED

IN TEN VOLUMES

VOL. III





WALTER SCOTT IN 1808

*From the painting by Raeburn*



MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE  
OF  
SIR WALTER SCOTT  
BART.

BY  
JOHN GIBSON LOCKHART

IN TEN VOLUMES  
VOLUME III



BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
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# SIR WALTER SCOTT

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## CHAPTER XVI

DRYDEN. — CRITICAL PIECES. — EDITION OF SLINGSBY'S MEMOIRS, ETC. — MARMION BEGUN. — VISIT TO LONDON. — ELLIS. — ROSE. — CANNING. — MISS SEWARD. — SCOTT SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION ON SCOTCH JURISPRUDENCE. — LETTERS TO SOUTHEY, ETC. — PUBLICATION OF MARMION. — ANECDOTES. — THE EDINBURGH REVIEW ON MARMION

1806-1808

DURING the whole of 1806 and 1807, Dryden continued to occupy the greater share of Scott's literary hours; but in the course of the former year he found time and (notwithstanding all these political bickerings) inclination to draw up three papers for the Edinburgh Review; namely, one on the poems and translations of the Hon. William Herbert; a second, more valuable and elaborate, in which he compared the Specimens of Early English Romances by Ellis, with the Selection of Ancient English Metrical Romances by Ritson; and, lastly, that exquisite piece of humor, his article on the Miseries of Human Life, to which Mr. Jeffrey added some, if not all, of the *Reviewers' Groans* with which it concludes. It was in September, 1806, too, that Messrs. Longman put forth, in a separate volume, those of his own Ballads which, having been included in the Minstrelsy, were already their property, together with a collection of his Lyrical Pieces; for which he received £100. This publication, obviously suggested by the continued popularity of the Lay, was

highly successful, seven thousand copies having been disposed of before the first collective edition of his poetical works appeared. He had also proposed to include the House of Aspen in the same volume, but, on reflection, once more laid his prose tragedy aside. About the same time he issued, though without his name, a miscellaneous volume entitled *Original Memoirs* written during the Great Civil Wars; being the Life of Sir Henry Slingsby, and *Memoirs* of Captain Hodgson, with Notes, etc. Scott's preface consists of a brief but elegant and interesting biography of the gallant cavalier Slingsby; his notes are few and unimportant. This volume (by which he gained nothing as editor) was put forth in October by Messrs. Constable; and in November, 1806, he began *Marmion*, the publication of which was the first important business of his in which that enterprising firm had a primary part.

He was at this time in frequent communication with several leading booksellers, each of whom would willingly have engrossed his labors; but from the moment that his literary undertakings began to be serious, he seems to have resolved against forming so strict a connection with any one publisher, as might at all interfere with the freedom of his transactions. I think it not improbable that his interests as the partner of Ballantyne may have had some influence in this part of his conduct; at all events, there can be little doubt that the hope of sharing more and more in the profits of Scott's original works induced the competing booksellers to continue and extend their patronage of the Edinburgh printer, who had been introduced to their notice as the personal friend of the most rising author of the day. But, nevertheless, I can have no doubt that Scott was mainly guided by his love of independence. It was always his maxim, that no author should ever let any one house fancy that they had obtained a right of monopoly over his works — or, as he expressed it, in the language of the Scotch feudalists,

“that they had completely thirled him to their mill;” and through life, as we shall see, the instant he perceived the least trace of this feeling, he asserted his freedom, not by word, but by some decided deed, on whatever considerations of pecuniary convenience the step might make it necessary for him to trample. Of the conduct of Messrs. Longman, who had been principally concerned in the publication of the *Minstrelsy*, the *Lay*, *Sir Tristrem*, and the *Ballads*, he certainly could have had no reason to complain; on the contrary, he has in various places attested that it was liberal and handsome beyond his expectation; but, nevertheless, a negotiation which they now opened proved fruitless, and ultimately they had no share whatever in the second of his original works.

Constable offered a thousand guineas for the poem very shortly after it was begun, and without having seen one line of it; and Scott, without hesitation, accepted this proposal. It may be gathered from the *Introduction* of 1830, that private circumstances of a delicate nature rendered it highly desirable for him to obtain the immediate command of such a sum; the price was actually paid long before the poem was published; and it suits very well with Constable's character to suppose that his readiness to advance the money may have outstripped the calculations of more established dealers, and thus cast the balance in his favor. He was not, however, so unwise as to keep the whole adventure to himself. His bargain being fairly concluded, he tendered one fourth of the copyright to Mr. Miller of Albemarle Street, and another to Mr. Murray, then of Fleet Street, London; and both these booksellers appear to have embraced his proposition with eagerness. “I am,” Murray wrote to Constable on the 6th February, 1807, “truly sensible of the kind remembrance of me in your liberal purchase. You have rendered Mr. Miller no less happy by your admission of him; and we both view it as honorable,



profitable, and glorious to be concerned in the publication of a new poem by Walter Scott." The news that a thousand guineas had been paid for an unseen and unfinished MS. appeared in those days portentous; and it must be allowed that the writer who received such a sum for a performance in embryo, had made a great step in the hazards, as well as in the honors, of authorship.

The private circumstances which he alludes to as having precipitated his reappearance as a poet were connected with his brother Thomas's final withdrawal from the profession of a Writer to the Signet, which arrangement seems to have become quite necessary towards the end of 1806; but it is extremely improbable that, in the absence of any such occurrence, a young, energetic, and ambitious man would have long resisted the cheering stimulus of such success as had attended *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

"I had formed," he says, "the prudent resolution to bestow a little more labor than I had yet done on my productions, and to be in no hurry again to announce myself as a candidate for literary fame. Accordingly, particular passages of a poem which was finally called '*Marmion*' were labored with a good deal of care by one by whom much care was seldom bestowed. Whether the work was worth the labor or not, I am no competent judge; but I may be permitted to say that the period of its composition was a very happy one in my life; so much so, that I remember with pleasure at this moment (1830) some of the spots in which particular passages were composed. It is probably owing to this that the introductions to the several cantos assumed the form of familiar epistles to my intimate friends, in which I alluded, perhaps more than was necessary or graceful, to my domestic occupations and amusements — a loquacity which may be excused by those who remember that I was still young, light-headed, and happy, and that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*." <sup>1</sup>

The first four of the Introductory Epistles are dated

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to *Marmion*, 1830.

Ashestiel, and they point out very distinctly some of the "spots" which, after the lapse of so many years, he remembered with pleasure for their connection with particular passages of Marmion. There is a knoll with some tall old ashes on the adjoining farm of the Peel, where he was very fond of sitting by himself, and it still bears the name of the *Sheriff's Knowe*. Another favorite seat was beneath a huge oak hard by the Tweed, at the extremity of the *haugh* of Ashestiel. It was here, that while meditating his verses, he used

"to stray,  
And waste the solitary day  
In plucking from yon fen the reed,  
And watch it floating down the Tweed;  
Or idly list the shrilling lay  
With which the milkmaid cheers her way,  
Marking its cadence rise and fall,  
As from the field, beneath her pail,  
She trips it down the uneven dale."

He frequently wandered far from home, however, attended only by his dog, and would return late in the evening, having let hours after hours slip away among the soft and melancholy wildernesses where Yarrow creeps from her fountains. The lines,

"Oft in my mind such thoughts awake,  
By lone Saint Mary's silent lake," etc.,

paint a scene not less impressive than what Byron found amidst the gigantic pines of the forest of Ravenna; and how completely does he set himself before us in the moment of his gentler and more solemn inspiration, by the closing couplet, —

"Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,  
So stilly is the solitude."

But when the theme was of a more stirring order, he enjoyed pursuing it over brake and fell at the full speed of his Lieutenant. I well remember his saying, as I rode with him across the hills from Ashestiel to Newark one day in his declining years, "Oh, man, I had many a

grand gallop among these braes when I was thinking of Marmion, but a trotting canny pony must serve me now." His friend, Mr. Skene, however, informs me that many of the more energetic descriptions, and particularly that of the battle of Flodden, were struck out while he was in quarters again with his cavalry, in the autumn of 1807. "In the intervals of drilling," he says, "Scott used to delight in walking his powerful black steed up and down by himself upon the Portobello sands, within the beating of the surge; and now and then you would see him plunge in his spurs, and go off as if at the charge, with the spray dashing about him. As we rode back to Musselburgh, he often came and placed himself beside me, to repeat the verses that he had been composing during these pauses of our exercise."

He seems to have communicated fragments of the poem very freely during the whole of its progress. As early as the 22d February, 1807, I find Mrs. Hayman acknowledging, in the name of the Princess of Wales, the receipt of a copy of the Introduction to Canto III., in which occurs the tribute to Her Royal Highness's heroic father, mortally wounded the year before at Jena—a tribute so grateful to her feelings that she herself shortly after sent the poet an elegant silver vase as a memorial of her thankfulness. And about the same time, the Marchioness of Abercorn expresses the delight with which both she and her lord had read the generous verses on Pitt and Fox in another of those epistles.<sup>1</sup> But his connection with this noble family was no new one; for his father, and afterwards his brother Thomas, had been the auditors of their Scotch rental.

In March, his researches concerning Dryden carried him again to the south. During several weeks he gave

<sup>1</sup> [The Marchioness of Abercorn was Anne Jane, daughter of the second Earl of Arran. For many years she was one of Scott's most constant and confidential correspondents. Selections from the long series of letters to this friend were first published in *Familiar Letters*. Lady Abercorn died in May, 1827.]

his day pretty regularly to the pamphlets and MSS. of the British Museum, and the evening to the brilliant societies that now courted him whenever he came within their sphere. His recent political demonstrations during the brief reign of the Whigs seem to have procured for him on this occasion a welcome of redoubled warmth among the leaders of his own now once more victorious party. "As I had," he writes to his brother-in-law, in India, "contrary to many who avowed the same opinions in sunshine, held fast my integrity during the Foxites' interval of power, I found myself of course very well with the new administration." But he uniformly reserved his Saturday and Sunday either for Mr. Ellis, at Sunning Hill, or Lord and Lady Abercorn, at their beautiful villa, near Stanmore; and the press copy of Cantos I. and II. of *Marmion* attests that most of it reached Ballantyne in sheets, franked by the Marquis, or his son-in-law, Lord Aberdeen, during April, 1807.

Before he turned homeward he made a short visit to his friend William Stewart Rose, at his cottage of Gundimore, in Hampshire, and enjoyed in his company various long rides in the New Forest, a day in the dockyard of Portsmouth, and two or three more in the Isle of Wight.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am sure I shall gratify every reader by extracting some lines alluding to Scott's visit at Mr. Rose's Marine Villa, from an unpublished poem, entitled *Gundimore*, kindly placed at my disposal by his host.

"Here Walter Scott has woo'd the northern muse;  
Here he with me has joyed to walk or cruise;  
And hence has pricked through Yten's holt, where we  
Have called to mind how under greenwood tree,  
Pierced by the partner of his 'woodland craft,'  
King Rufus fell by Tyrrell's random shaft.  
Hence have we ranged by Celtic camps and barrows,  
Or climbed the expectant bark, to thread the Narrows  
Of Hurst, bound westward to the gloomy bower  
Where Charles was prisoned in yon island tower;  
Or from a longer flight alighted where  
Our navies to recruit their strength repair—  
And there have seen the ready shot and gun;  
Seen in red steam the molten copper run;  
And massive anchor forged, whose iron teeth  
Should hold the three-decked ship when billows seethe;  
And when the arsenal's dark stithy rang

Several sheets of the MS., and corrected proofs of III., are also under covers franked from Gundin Mr. Rose; and I think I must quote the note accompanied one of these detachments, as showing good-natured buoyancy of mind and temper with the Poet received in every stage of his progress to and suggestions of his watchful friends, Erskine Ballantyne. The latter having animadverted on the first draft of the song "Where shall the lover and sketched what he thought would be a better arrangement of the stanza — Scott answers as follows: —

DEAR JAMES, — I am much obliged to you for your rhymes. I presume it can make no difference as to the air if the first three lines rhyme; and I wish to consult with your leisure, if it is absolutely necessary that the fourth should be out of poetic rhythm, as "the other fair one" certainly is. — For example, would this

"Should my heart from thee falter,  
To another love alter

---

With the loud hammers of the Cyclop-gang,  
Swallowing the darkness up, have seen with wonder,  
The flashing fire, and heard fast-following thunder.  
Here, witched from summer sea and softer reign,  
Foscolo courted Muse of milder strain.  
On these ribbed sands was Coleridge pleased to pace,  
While ebbing seas have hummed a rolling base  
To his rapt talk! Alas! all these are gone,  
'And I and other creeping things live on.'  
The flask no more, dear Walter, shall I quaff  
With thee, no more enjoy thy hearty laugh!  
No more shalt thou to me extend thy hand,  
A welcome pilgrim to my father's land!

"Alone, such friends and comrades I deplore,  
And peopled but with phantoms is the shore:  
Hence have I fled my haunted beach; yet so  
Would not alike a sylvan home forego.  
Though wakening fond regrets, its sere and yellow  
Leaves, and sweet inland murmur, serve to mellow  
And soothe the sobered sorrow they recall,  
When mantled in the faded garb of fall; —  
But wind and wave — unlike the sighing sedge  
And murmuring leaf — give grief a coarser edge:  
And in each howling blast my fancy hears  
'The voices of the dead, and songs of other years.'"

(For the rhyme we 'll say Walter)  
Deserting my lover."

There is here the same number of syllables, but arranged in cadence. I return the proof and send more copy. There will be six Cantos. Yours truly, W. S.

In the first week of May we find him at Lichfield, having diverged from the great road to Scotland for the purpose of visiting Miss Seward. Her account of her old correspondent, whom till now she had never seen, was addressed to Mr. Cary, the translator of Dante; and it may interest the reader to compare it with other similar sketches of earlier and later date.

"On Friday last," she says, "the poetically great Walter Scott came 'like a sunbeam to my dwelling.' This proudest boast of the Caledonian muse is tall, and rather robust than slender, but lame in the same manner as Mr. Hayley, and in a greater measure. Neither the contour of his face nor yet his features are elegant; his complexion healthy, and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eyelashes, with flaxen eyebrows; and a countenance open, ingenuous, and benevolent. When seriously conversing or earnestly attentive, though his eyes are rather of a lightish gray, deep thought is on their lids; he contracts his brow, and the rays of genius gleam aslant from the orbs beneath them. An upper lip too long prevents his mouth from being decidedly handsome, but the sweetest emanations of temper and heart play about it when he talks cheerfully or smiles — and in company he is much oftener gay than contemplative — his conversation an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion, and playful archness — while on serious themes it is nervous and eloquent; the accent decidedly Scotch, yet by no means broad. On the whole, no expectation is disappointed which his poetry must excite in all who feel the power and graces of human inspiration. . . . Not less astonishing than was Johnson's memory is that of Mr. Scott; like Johnson, also, his recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice either to his own writings or those of others. The stranger

guest delighted us all by the unaffected charms of his and manners. Such visits are among the most high honors which my writings have procured for me."

Miss Seward adds that she showed him the passage in Cary's *Dante* where Michael Scott occurs, and though he admired the spirit and skill of the version, he confessed his inability to find pleasure in the *Commedia*. "The plan," he said, "appeared to him happy; the personal malignity and strange mode of revenge presumptuous and uninteresting."

By the 12th of May he was at Edinburgh for the commencement of the summer session, and the printing of *Marmion* seems thenceforth to have gone on at times with great rapidity, at others slowly and irregularly. The latter Cantos having no doubt been merely blocked up when the first went to press, and his professional engagements, but above all, his Dryden, occasioning frequent interruptions.

Mr. Guthrie Wright, a relation and intimate friend of William Erskine, who was among the familiar associates of the Troop, has furnished me with some particulars which throw light on the construction of *Marmion*. The gentleman, I may observe, had, through Scott's offices, succeeded his brother Thomas in the charge of the Abercorn business:—

"In the summer of 1807," he says, "I had the pleasure of making a trip with Sir Walter to Dumfries, for the purpose of meeting the late Lord Abercorn on his way with his family to Ireland. His Lordship did not arrive for two or three days after we reached Dumfries, and we employed the interval in visiting Sweetheart Abbey, Caerlaverock Castle, and other ancient buildings in the neighborhood. I need not say how much I enjoyed the journey. Every one who has known the pleasure of his acquaintance knows the inexhaustible store of anecdote and good-humor he possessed. He recited poetry and old legends from morn till night, and in short it is impossible to say that anything could be more delightful than his society."

what I particularly allude to is the circumstance, that at that time he was writing *Marmion*, the three or four first cantos of which he had with him, and which he was so good as to read to me. It is unnecessary to say how much I was enchanted with them; but as he good-naturedly asked me to state any observations that occurred to me, I said in joke that it appeared to me he had brought his hero by a very strange *route* into Scotland. 'Why,' says I, 'did ever mortal coming from England to Edinburgh go by Gifford, Crichton Castle, Borthwick Castle, and over the top of Blackford Hill? Not only is it a circuitous *détour*, but there never was a road that way since the world was created!' 'That is a most irrelevant objection,' said Sir Walter; 'it was my good pleasure to bring *Marmion* by that route, for the purpose of describing the places you have mentioned, and the view from Blackford Hill—it was his business to find his road and pick his steps the best way he could. But, pray, how would you have me bring him? Not by the post-road, surely, as if he had been travelling in a mail-coach?' 'No,' I replied; 'there were neither post-roads nor mail-coaches in those days; but I think you might have brought him with a less chance of getting into a swamp, by allowing him to travel the natural route by Dunbar and the seacoast; and then he might have tarried for a space with the famous Earl of Angus, surnamed Bell-the-Cat, at his favorite residence of Tantallon Castle, by which means you would have had not only that fortress with all his feudal followers, but the Castle of Dunbar, the Bass, and all the beautiful scenery of the Forth, to describe.' This observation seemed to strike him much, and after a pause he exclaimed, 'By Jove, you are right! I ought to have brought him that way;' and he added, 'but before he and I part, depend upon it he shall visit Tantallon.' He then asked me if I had ever been there, and upon saying I had frequently, he desired me to describe it, which I did; and I verily believe it is from what I then said, that the accurate description contained in the fifth canto was given—at least I never heard him say he had afterwards gone to visit the castle; and when the poem was published, I remember he laughed, and asked me how I liked Tantallon." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Guthrie Wright, in his letter to me (Edinburgh, April 5, 1837), adds: "You have said a good deal about Sir Walter's *military* career,



Just a year had elapsed from his beginning the when he penned the Epistle for Canto IV. at A and who, that considers how busily his various and labors had been crowding the interval, can to be told that

“ Even now, it scarcely seems a day  
Since first I tuned this idle lay —  
A task so often laid aside  
When leisure graver cares denied —  
That now November’s dreary gale,  
Whose voice inspired my opening tale,  
That same November gale once more  
Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow shore.”

The fifth Introduction was written in Edinburgh the month following; that to the last Canto, during Christmas festivities of Mertoun-house, where, for the first days of his ballad-rhyming, down to the close of life, he, like his bearded ancestor, usually spent the season with the immediate head of the race. The

and truly stated how much he was the life and soul of the corps at quarters he used ‘to set the table in a roar.’ Numberless anecdotes of him might be given about that time. I shall only mention one. A jutant, Jack Adams, was a jolly fat old fellow, a great favorite, one day, and was buried with military honors. We were all very full on the occasion — had marched to the Greyfriars Churchyard, Dead March in Saul, and other solemn music, and after having the grave, were coming away — but there seemed to be a moment as to the tune which should be played by the band, when Scott might venture an opinion, it should be, *I hae laid a herrin’ in sae* — marched off in quick time to that tune accordingly.

“As an instance of the fun and good-humor that prevailed among us as well as of Sir Walter’s ready wit, I may likewise mention an anecdotal to myself. My rear-rank man rode a great brute of a carriage over which he had not sufficient control, and which therefore frequently, at a charge, broke through the front rank, and he could him up till he had got several yards ahead of the troop. One of us were standing at ease after this had occurred, I was rather grumbly in pose, at one of my legs being carried off in this unceremonious way, with no small danger of my being unhorsed, when Scott said, ‘I think you are most properly placed in your present position, as it is your especial business to *check overcharges*,’ alluding to my office as Auditor of the Court of Session, to check overcharges in bills of exchange — (1839.)

appendix of notes, including a mass of curious antiquarian quotations, must have moved somewhat slowly through the printer's hands; but Marmion was at length ready for publication by the middle of February, 1808.

Among the "graver cares" which he alludes to as having interrupted his progress in the poem, the chief were, as has been already hinted, those arising from the altered circumstances of his brother. These are mentioned in a letter to Miss Seward, dated in August, 1807. The lady had, among other things, announced her pleasure in the prospect of a visit from the author of *Madoc*, expressed her admiration of "Master Betty, the Young Roscius," and lamented the father's design of placing that "miraculous boy" for three years under a certain "schoolmaster of eminence at Shrewsbury."<sup>1</sup> Scott says in answer:—

"Since I was favored with your letter, my dear Miss Seward, I have brought the unpleasant transactions to which my last letter alluded, pretty near to a conclusion, much more fortunate than I had ventured to hope. Of my brother's creditors, those connected with him by blood or friendship showed all the kindness which those ties are in Scotland peculiarly calculated to produce; and, what is here much more uncommon, those who had no personal connection with him, or his family, showed a liberality which would not have misbecome the generosity of the English. Upon the whole, his affairs are put in a course of management which I hope will enable him to begin life anew with renovated hopes, and not entirely destitute of the means of recommencing business.

"I am very happy — although a little jealous withal — that you are to have the satisfaction of Southey's personal acquaintance. I am certain you will like the Epic bard exceedingly. Although he does not deign to enter into the mere trifling intercourse of society, yet when a sympathetic spirit calls him forth, no man talks with

<sup>1</sup> See Miss Seward's *Letters*, vol. vi. p. 364.

more animation on literary topics; and perhaps no man in England has read and studied so much, with the powers of making use of the information which he is indefatigable in acquiring. I despair of reconciling you to my little friend Jeffrey, although I think I could succeed to his making some impression on your prepossession were you to converse with him. I think Southey is himself in injustice in supposing the Edinburgh Review any other, could have sunk Madoc, even for its merits. But the size and price of the work, joined to the nature of an age which must be treated as nurses' children, are sufficient reasons why a poem, on such a model, should not have taken immediately. Witness the similar fate of Milton's immortal work, in the reign of Charles II., at a time when poetry was more fashionable than at present. As to the division of the profits, I only think that Southey does not understand the gentlemen of *the trade*, emphatically so called, as I do. Without any greater degree of *fourberie* than I conceive the long practice of their brethren has given them a matter of prescriptive right, they contrive to divide the author's proportion of profits down to a mere trifle. It is the tale of the fox that went a-hunting with the hen upon condition of equal division of the spoil; and I do not quite blame the booksellers, when I consider the very singular nature of their *mystery*. A butcher naturally understands something of black cattle, and would the jockey who should presume to exercise his profession without a competent knowledge of horse-flesh. I have never heard of a bookseller pretending to understand any commodity in which he dealt? They are the only men in the world who professedly, and by choice, deal in what is called 'a pig in a poke.' When you see the abominable trash which, by their sheer ignorance, is published every year, you will readily excuse the indemnification which they must necessarily receive for the expense of authors of some value. In fact

the account between an individual bookseller and such a man as Southey may be iniquitous enough, yet I apprehend, that upon the whole the account between *the trade* and the authors of Britain at large is pretty fairly balanced; and what these gentlemen gain at the expense of one class of writers is lavished, in many cases, in bringing forward other works of little value. I do not know but this, upon the whole, is favorable to the cause of literature. A bookseller publishes twenty books, in hopes of hitting upon one good speculation, as a person buys a parcel of shares in a lottery, in hopes of gaining a prize. Thus the road is open to all, and if the successful candidate is a little fleeced, in order to form petty prizes to console the losing adventurers, still the cause of literature is benefited, since none is excluded from the privilege of competition. This does not apologize for Southey's carelessness about his interest — for

‘his name is up, and may go  
From Toledo to Madrid.’

“Pray, don’t trust Southey too long with Mr. White. He is even more determined in his admiration of old *ruins* than I am. You see I am glad to pick a hole in his jacket, being more jealous of his personal favor in Miss Seward’s eyes than of his poetical reputation.

“I quite agree with you about the plan of young Betty’s education, and am no great idolater of the learned languages, excepting for what they contain. We spend in youth that time in admiring the wards of the key, which we should employ in opening the cabinet and examining its treasures. A prudent and accomplished friend, who would make instruction acceptable to him for the sake of the amusement it conveys would be worth an hundred schools. How can so wonderfully premature a genius, accustomed to excite interest in thousands, be made a member of a class with other boys!”

To return to Scott’s own “graver cares” while *Marmion* was in progress. Among them were those of pre-

paring himself for an office to which he was formally appointed soon afterwards, namely, that of Secretary to a Parliamentary Commission for the improvement of Scottish Jurisprudence. This Commission, at the head of which was Sir Islay Campbell, Lord President of the Court of Session, continued in operation for two or three years. Scott's salary, as secretary, was a mere trifle; but he had been led to expect that his exertions in this capacity would lead to better things. In giving a general view of his affairs to his brother-in-law in India, he says: "The Clerk of Session who retired to make way for me, retains the appointments, while I do the duty. This was rather a hard bargain, but it was made when the Administration was going to pieces, and I was glad to swim ashore on a plank of the wreck; or, in a word, to be provided for anyhow, before the new people came in. To be sure, nobody could have foreseen that in a year's time my friends were all to be in again. . . . I am principally pleased with my new appointment as being conferred on me by our chief law lords and King's counsel, and consequently an honorable professional distinction. The employment will be but temporary, but may have consequences important to my future lot in life, if I give due satisfaction in the discharge of it." He appears accordingly to have submitted to a great deal of miserable drudgery, in mastering beforehand the details of the technical controversies which had called for legislative interference; and he discharged his functions, as usual, with the warm approbation of his superiors: but no result followed. This is alluded to, among other things, in his correspondence with Mr. Southey, during the printing of *Marmion*. I shall now go back to extract some of these letters; they will not only enable the reader to fill up the outline of the preceding narrative, as regards Scott's own various occupations at this period, but illustrate very strikingly the readiness with which, however occupied, he would turn aside, whenever he saw any

opportunity of forwarding the pursuits and interests of other literary men.

Mr. Southey had written to Scott, on the 27th September, 1807, informing him that he had desired his booksellers to forward a copy of *Palmerin of England*, then on the eve of publication; announcing also his *Chronicle of the Cid*; and adding, "I rejoice to hear that we are to have another *Lay*, and hope we may have as many *Last Lays of the Minstrel* as our ancestors had *Last Words of Mr. Baxter*." Scott's answer was this:—

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY, ESQ.

ASHESTIEL, 1st October, 1807.

MY DEAR SOUTHEY, — It will give me the most sincere pleasure to receive any token of your friendly remembrance, more especially in the shape of a romance of knight-errantry. You know so well how to furbish the arms of a *preux chevalier*, without converting him à la *Tressan* into a modern light dragoon, that my expectations from *Palmerin* are very high, and I have given directions to have him sent to this retreat so soon as he reaches Edinburgh. The half-guinea for Hogg's poems was duly received. The uncertainty of your residence prevented the book being sent at the time proposed — it shall be forwarded from Edinburgh to the bookseller at Carlisle, who will probably know how to send it safe. I hope very soon to send you my *Life of Dryden*, and eke my *last Lay* — (by the way, the former ditty was only proposed as the lay of the *last Minstrel*, not his *last fitt*.) I grieve that you have renounced the harp; but still I confide that, having often touched it so much to the delight of the hearers, you will return to it again after a short interval. As I don't much admire compliments, you may believe me sincere when I tell you that I have read *Madoc* three times since my first cursory perusal, and each time with increased admiration of the poetry. But a poem whose merits are of that higher tone does not

immediately take with the public at large. It is even possible that during your own life — and may it be as long as every real lover of literature can wish — you must be contented with the applause of the few whom nature has gifted with the rare taste for discriminating in poetry. But the mere *readers of verse* must one day come in, and then Madoc will assume his real place at the feet of Milton. Now this opinion of mine was not that (to speak frankly) which I formed on reading the poem at first, though I then felt much of its merit. I hope you have not, and don't mean to part with the copyright. I do not think Wordsworth and you understand the bookselling animal well enough, and wish you would one day try my friend Constable, who would give any terms for a connection with you. I am most anxious to see the Cid. Do you know I committed a theft upon you (neither of gait, kine, nor horse, nor outside nor inside plenishing, such as my forefathers sought in Cumberland), but of many verses of the Queen Auragua,<sup>1</sup> or howsoever you spell her name? I repeated them to a very great lady (the Princess of Wales), who was so much delighted with them, that I think she got them by heart also. She asked a copy, but that I declined to give, under pretence I could not give an accurate one; but I promised to prefer her request to you. If you wish to oblige Her R. H., I will get the verses transmitted to her; if not, the thing may be passed over.

Many thanks for your invitation to Keswick, which I hope to accept, time and season permitting. Is your brother with you? If so, remember me kindly.<sup>2</sup> Where is Wordsworth, and what doth he do? I wrote him a few lines some weeks ago, which I suspect never came to hand. I suppose you are possessed of all relating to the Cid, otherwise I would mention an old romance, chiefly

<sup>1</sup> The ballad of *Queen Orraca* was first published in the *Edinburgh Annual Register* for 1808.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Henry Southey had studied at the University of Edinburgh.

relating to his banishment, which is in John Frere's possession, and from which he made some lively translations in a tripping Alexandrine stanza. I dare say he would communicate the original, if it could be of the least use.<sup>1</sup> I am an humble petitioner that your interesting Spanish ballads be in some shape appended to the *Cid*. Be assured they will give him wings. There is a long letter written with a pen like a stick. I beg my respects to Mrs. Southey, in which Mrs. Scott joins; and I am, very truly and affectionately yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

TO THE SAME.

EDINBURGH, November, 1807.

MY DEAR SOUTHEY, — I received your letter some time ago, but had then no opportunity to see Constable, as I was residing at some distance from Edinburgh. Since I came to town I spoke to Constable, whom I find anxious to be connected with you. It occurs to me that the only difference between him and our fathers in the Row is on the principle contained in the old proverb: *He that would thrive — must rise by five; — He that has thriven — may lye till seven.* Constable would thrive, and therefore bestows more pains than our fathers who have thriven. I do not speak this without book, because I know he has pushed off several books which had got aground in the Row. But, to say the truth, I have always found advantage in keeping on good terms with several of the trade, but never suffering any one of them to consider me as a monopoly. They are very like farmers, who thrive best at a high rent; and, in general, take most pains to sell a book that has cost them money to purchase. The bad sale of *Thalaba* is truly astonishing; it should have sold off in a twelvemonth at farthest.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Southey introduced, in the appendix to his *Chronicle of the Cid*, some specimens of Mr. Frere's admirable translation of the ancient *Poema del Cid*, to which Scott here alludes.